

Veterans News

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Gov. Schwarzenegger Issues Statement On Joint Solution Reached on Post-9/11 GI Bill Implementation in California *California Veterans Now Have Full Access to Education Benefits Under Federal Post- 9/11 GI Bill*

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today issued the following statement regarding the joint solution reached between the State of California and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs concerning the implementation of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill in California. Prior to this joint solution, the implementation of this measure prevented California veterans planning to attend private colleges and universities from receiving their full education benefits. The Schwarzenegger Administration, working collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the University of California, provided a roadmap to resolve this. The joint agreement reached ensures eligible California veterans have access to the education benefits earned through their service to our county.

"Through the combined efforts of my Administration and the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, California's veterans can now access the full education benefits they have so rightfully earned through their great service to our nation," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "I want to personally thank U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki for his commitment to resolving this matter and working with us to ensure California's veterans can get the education benefits they deserve."

In April 2009, the Schwarzenegger Administration raised the Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition/fee issue with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The practice of charging "fees" for attending California's public colleges and universities rather than charging "tuition" created a situation where veterans attending private institutions of higher learning could not receive the full education benefits provided by the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

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Obama Administration and the State of California Fix Post 9/11 GI Bill Tuition Glitch

*Veterans Will Now Have Standardized Access to Private, Graduate and Out-of State
Schools in California Under Yellow Ribbon Program*

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today a joint solution has been reached between the State of California and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) concerning how tuition and fees are determined. The new definition will allow for standardized application under the new Post 9/11 GI Bill and the accompanying Yellow Ribbon program.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is an important part of fulfilling our promise to the men and women who have served our country so honorably," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "This solution will allow all Veterans who want to attend a California school the same benefits as any other Veteran across the nation."

The Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefit authorizes VA to pay the actual tuition and fees charged by a university up to the maximum in-state tuition and fees charged by the most expensive public university in the state.

In interpreting the statute in its implementing regulation, VA determined that it must set separate state maximums for tuition and fees, as opposed to a single combined total.

In California, public schools have traditionally charged no tuition but relatively high fees. Thus a student attending private school in California would receive much less of a basic tuition benefit under the Post 9/11 GI Bill Yellow Ribbon program than students at private schools in other states.

Recently, California's public universities introduced a new billing line item, "Educational Fee/Tuition." VA has determined that, under its existing regulations, the Department can consider this new billing line item as "tuition" for the purposes of calculating the state's maximum payments.

"As a result of this interpretation, the maximum basic benefit VA can pay in California will increase, dramatically reducing the "gap" to be made up by California schools under the Yellow Ribbon agreement," added Under Secretary for Benefits Patrick W. Dunne.

In California alone, approximately 80 schools have entered into more than 235 agreements for the 2009-2010 school year. The new maximum, in-state tuition amount for California public institutions is now \$287 per credit hour.

Over 1,100 colleges, universities and schools across the country have entered into more than 3,400 "Yellow Ribbon" program agreements with VA to improve financial aid for Veterans participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Yellow Ribbon program, a provision of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, funds tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. Institutions can contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses, and VA will match this additional funding for eligible students.

The Yellow Ribbon program is reserved for Veterans eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill at the 100 percent benefit level. This includes those who served at least 36 months on active duty or served at least 30 continuous days and were discharged due to a service-related injury.

Additional information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon program, as well as VA's other educational benefits, can be obtained by visiting VA's Web site www.gibill.va.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551).